

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EA-10

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R 120941Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 354

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0215

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PP

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENCE DAY PLANNING

1. DAVID MARSH, HEAD OF UNIT IN CHIEF MINISTER'S OFFICE CHARGED WITH PLANNING INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONIES, GAVE ME THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CONFIDENTIALLY AND INFORMALLY:

2. DATE: THE CHIEF MINISTER IS DETERMINED THAT INDEPENDENCE WILL BE NO LATER THAN JUNE 28, AND PREPARATIONS ARE BEING WORKED OUT ON THAT ASSUMPTION. MARSH APPROACHED TEI ABAL, LEADER OF UNITED PARTY, ON CHIEF MINISTER'S BEHALF, AND TEI ABAL SAID HE WOULD GO ALONG WITH SOMARE ON THE DATE. FINAL DECISION, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BE MADE UNTIL APRIL SESSION OF HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. (SEE COMMENT.)

3. DURATION: IT IS PLANNED THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS WILL ARRIVE IN PORT MORESBY JUNE 27. INDEPENDENCE WILL BE PROCLAIMED ON JUNE 28, WITH EXTENSIVE PUBLIC CEREMONIES, INCLUDING AN EXCHANGE OF GIFTS. JUNE 29 WILL BE DAY OF PRAYER WITH ECUMENICAL CHURCH SERVICES. JUNE 30 WILL BE DEVOTED TO CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (DANCING, PAGEANTS, ETC.) AND SPORTS EVENTS. IT IS ASSUMED THAT GUESTS WILL DEPART ON JULY 1, SOME TO TRAVEL WITHIN PNG, OTHERS TO RETURN HOME.

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3. REPRESENTATION: THERE WILL BE A RELATIVELY SHORT LIST OF

COUNTRIES WHOSE HEAD OF STATE WILL BE INVITED, AND MARSH EXPECTS THE UNITED STATES TO BE ON THAT LIST. THE REASON IS "BECAUSE PNG WOULD NOT BE A NATION EXCEPT FOR U.S. MILITARY ACTION IN WORLD WAR II." MARSH RECOGNIZES THAT IT WOULD BE MOST UNLIKELY THAT PRESIDENT OR VICE PRESIDENT WOULD ATTEND BUT THEY HOPE SOME SENIOR PERSON WOULD REPRESENT THE UNITED STATES. HE ASKED HOW LARGE A RETINUE OUR CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE IS LIKELY TO BRING.

4. GIFT: THERE WILL BE A PUBLIC EXCHANGE OF GIFTS. SOME NATIONS, SUCH AS AUSTRALIA, WILL GIVE GIFTS WORTH MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS. OTHERS WILL OFFER THEIR OWN HANDICRAFTS, WITH A LOW MONETARY VALUE. THEY WILL BE EQUALLY APPRECIATED IF THEY ARE PRESENTED IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT. PNG WILL RECIPROCATE WITH ITS OWN HANDICRAFTS. MARSH HALF WAY SUGGESTED U.S. MIGHT WANT TO BUILD A WING OF THE NEW NATIONAL LIBRARY. I POINTED OUT THAT A GIFT OF SUCH PROPORTION INVOLVED HAVE HAD TO BE PLACED IN OUR BUDGET MACHINERY TWO YEARS AGO. HE THEN SUGGESTED FURNITURE FOR A ROOM IN THE LIBRARY, OR BOOKS. HE SAID SWEDEN WAS GIVING THE WOOD PANELLING FOR A ROOM IN THE LIBRARY. HE SAID HE HOPED SOME COUNTRIES WOULD PRESENT A LETTER STATING THAT PNG ARTIFACTS, NOW IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THAT COUNTRY, WOULD BE RETURNED TO PNG WHEN PNG HAD ADEQUATE MUSEUM FACILITIES TO DISPLAY THEM (THAT DAY, HE ADDED, WOULD BE FAR IN THE FUTURE).

5. EMBASSY: HE ASKED IF THIS POST WOULD BE ELEVATED TO EMBASSY STATUS SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH INDEPENDENCE. I SAID THAT I DOUBTED THAT A DECISION ON TIMING HAD YET BEEN MADE.

6. COMMENT: THE CONSENSUS AROUND TOWN HAS BEEN THAT INDEPENDENCE DAY WOULD BE IN SEPTEMBER OR LATER, AND MARSH CONCEDED THAT SOMARE AND TEI ABAL MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THEIR FOLLOWERS TO APPROVE THE JUNE 28 DATE. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE AND THINGS WILL HAVE TO FALL INTO PLACE NEATLY TO MAKE THE JUNE 28 DATE COME TRUE. HOWEVER, SOMARE IS A VERY SKILLFUL POLITICIAN, AND MARSH SAYS SOMARE'S ONLY WAVERING ON THE DATE HAS BEEN TO SET IT EARLIER, NOT LATER, THAN JUNE 28. (SEE SEPTTEL ABOUT OBSTACLES TO EARLY INDEPENDENCE.)
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